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High-level segment: Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

High-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

Identical letters dated 16 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué of the first symposium on the promotion of an inclusive and accountable public administration for sustainable development, held in the city of Cochabamba, Plurinational State of Bolivia, on 16 and 17 March 2016 (see annex).

The symposium was convened by the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, with support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It provided high-level public officials from Latin America and the Caribbean with a platform to share innovative practices and lessons learned on how to build an inclusive and accountable public administration for the achievement of sustainable development. Over 400 participants from 33 countries attended this capacity development event, including ministers, government officials, representatives of the United Nations, regional development banks, academia and other relevant organizations. The symposium resulted in the communiqué annexed to the present letter.

Panellists discussed regional and international issues relating to the promotion of: (a) effective and responsible institutions for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) ethical leadership, professionalism

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and a culture of integrity in the public sector; (c) coordination and political and institutional integration: change of mentality and change in the current silo mode of operation; and (d) participation in decision-making and the commitment and mechanisms to ensure accountable government.

In that regard, I would appreciate the circulation of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 15, and of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda items 5 (a) and 6, as input for the Assembly and the Council in their deliberations on development issues as well as an official document of the high-level political forum to be held from 11 to 20 July 2016.

(*Signed*) Sacha **Llorentty Soliz**
Permanent Representative of the
Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations

Annex to the identical letters dated 16 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Economic and Social Council

Communiqué on the promotion of an inclusive and accountable public administration for sustainable development

16 and 17 March 2016

Cochabamba, Plurinational State of Bolivia

Preamble

1. The symposium on the promotion of an inclusive and accountable public administration for sustainable development was held on 16 and 17 March 2016 in Cochabamba, Plurinational State of Bolivia, and was organized by the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations country team in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

2. The symposium provided high-level public officials from Latin America and the Caribbean with a platform to share knowledge on innovative practices and lessons learned on how to build an inclusive and accountable public administration for the achievement of sustainable development. Over 400 participants attended this capacity development event, including ministers, government officials, representatives of the United Nations, regional development banks, academia and other relevant organizations.

3. Panellists discussed regional and international issues relating to the promotion of: (a) effective and responsible institutions for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) ethical leadership, professionalism and a culture of integrity in the public sector; (c) coordination and political and institutional integration: change of mentality and change in the current silo mode of operation; and (d) participation in decision-making and the commitment and mechanisms to ensure accountable government.

4. During the symposium, participants showed appreciation to the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ECLAC for the successful event. They also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to exchange ideas and innovative experiences that can help all member countries in achieving the objectives of sustainable development.

5. In its resolution 69/327, the General Assembly, at the initiative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reaffirmed that among the foundations of sustainable development are transparent, participatory and responsible public institutions and a public administration that is professional, ethical and open to the use of information technology and communications. Also in the resolution, Member States were encouraged to promote effective and responsible leadership, a high level of professionalism, ethics, integrity, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in public institutions and the provision of public services at all levels.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses a common transforming vision based on solidarity, accountability and shared responsibility. It guides governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders interested in their efforts to eradicate poverty and promote a better world for all.

7. The following three global United Nations conferences held in 2015 have been the basis for the strengthening of international cooperation for the promotion of the 2030 Agenda and have guided Member States in the development of their own action plans to promote sustainable development: (a) Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa in July 2015; (b) United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in September 2015 to formally adopt the Sustainable Development Goals; and (c) twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, at which Member States adopted a binding agreement to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in the long term.

8. Democracy, good governance and the rule of law, along with a national and international enabling environment, are essential elements of sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger (General Assembly resolution 70/1, para. 9).

9. Social equity should be a central focus of public administration action. The poorest and most vulnerable should have equal rights and access to public services on an equal footing. Public services and social benefits should help to overcome inequality.

10. Service to citizens must be at the centre of the transformation of public administration. Appropriate institutional, professional and ethical leadership, a focus on diversity and gender equality, the use of information and communication technologies, innovation, accountability in the public sector and capacity-building are all important (resolution 69/327).

11. In its resolution 69/327, the General Assembly highlighted the positive contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities, including through some of their traditional values and principles, to strengthening individual and societal commitments in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of public administration and promote inclusive and accountable public services for sustainable development, including the Andean principles of *ama suwa* (do not be a thief), *ama llulla* (do not be a liar) and *ama qhilla* (do not be lazy), the Inupiat values of *pitqiksiġautaiññiq* (honesty) and *qiksiksrautiqaġniq* (respect for others) and the Blackfoot value of *tukuki* (impartiality and incorruptibility), while recognizing that it is a duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12. Also in resolution 69/327, the General Assembly reiterated that each State has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development. It recognized the importance of developing institutional capacity and human resources, e-government and citizen participation in the management of development programmes.

Recommendations

13. Based on the interventions and fruitful discussion at the international symposium on the promotion of an inclusive and accountable public administration for sustainable development, held in Cochabamba, Plurinational State Bolivia, the present communiqué highlights the following recommendations:

(a) National sovereignty over natural resources, the economy and policies is essential for building and promoting an inclusive and accountable public administration that results in a nationally owned strategy based on dialogue;

(b) States should decide how to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into their agendas, plans and national and local policies. Three elements are important to the implementation of the Goals: inclusion, by involving all relevant stakeholders; social equity as the core of public action; and integration, by coordinating the actions of all public bodies in implementing the necessary plans;

(c) The policies formulated by States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals must be integrated and coherent. Policies are most effective when they are handled in a way that takes into consideration their interrelated complexities. In this sense, horizontal coordination within the framework of the national Government, and between central government and local authorities through integrated public policies, is needed;

(d) The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires transformational leadership, capabilities, and resources in public administration complemented by ethical values for the transparent management of resources. Gender inequality must be overcome through a multiplicity of public policies and, especially, through participatory gender-responsive budgets;

(e) It is necessary to rethink the relationship between state, market and civil society. We must seek a government open to citizens. A new social contract is needed so that everyone is involved in the development plan. Hence, what is needed is a smart strategic vision of the public sector and ethical leadership at all levels so that the credibility of public administration is restored;

(f) Public services must be aimed at curbing inequality. Public services are a fundamental responsibility of the State, in cooperation with civil society and the private sector. Therefore, it is necessary to promote a new model of cooperation with the private sector that is focused on the welfare of all people;

(g) For plans and projects to have effective results, they should be designed to meet the needs of people and should promote their active participation in identifying their needs, identifying solutions and, most importantly, in implementing plans and projects at all levels. The role of local authorities in sustainable development will be ever more important. Therefore, working locally with all communities through innovative mechanisms is a must;

(h) To overcome a silo mentality (working in isolation and without coordination), it is important to foster a culture of collaboration based on a vision of the common good and the results to be obtained to advance the realization of national development agendas and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(i) Innovation and technology allow the State to become closer to citizens and share information. They are also a tool for citizens to communicate their needs,

knowledge and initiatives to the public sector. Furthermore, they are a tool for all stakeholders to work together in solving social, economic and environmental problems. Cooperation is needed to overcome the technical challenges and the digital divide. Processes improving public administration through the use of technologies should be developed, taking into account the efficiency and effectiveness of the solutions that these innovative instruments provide to citizens;

(j) Human talent plays a fundamental role in the achievement of sustainable development. Thus, a new profile and new skills are needed to form the public servant of the twenty-first century, based on a culture of ethics and responsiveness to the needs of each and every citizen, with particular emphasis on gender equality issues. Public officials also need to identify future scenarios and long-term plans to eliminate poverty and inequality and to ensure the welfare of future generations. It is also important to continue to promote the principles of independence, impartiality, merit and professionalism of public servants. Honesty and integrity are fundamental to the prevention of corruption. Ethical codes are very important in ensuring respect for the principles and values;

(k) Furthermore, it is essential to continue to support capacity-building through, for example, the exchange of innovative experiences in the areas of planning and institutional coordination, leadership and citizen participation. It is also important to develop methodologies to align national plans with the 2030 Agenda. International cooperation can also be important, for example, through the support of institutions such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECLAC and the Latin American Centre for Development Administration;

(l) Collaboration at the regional level is very important in promoting innovation and the skills needed for development;

(m) To review progress in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to collect and analyse disaggregated data on various aspects of sustainable development. The potential of information technology and communication could be exploited in this regard;

(n) This symposium can give new impetus to our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, drawing from the experiences of countries that have started to implement it. The discussions at the symposium will inform the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The forum is an important platform for reviewing the progress of each country in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It would be ideal for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to consider assessing their own needs, priorities and progress in the adaptation and implementation of the Goals at the national and local levels. Countries could also submit these results to the annual session of the high-level political forum that takes place at United Nations Headquarters in New York in July.